

CHRIST COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

THE SPILLIKIN

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A Note from the Dean

The academic year 1985-86, was a very good one in Christ College. We initiated another large class of enthusiastic freshmen, graduated a very strong senior class, and kept the sophomores and juniors hard at work, although many of them managed to escape to one of our Overseas Study Centers for a semester. Additionally, we regained contact with a large proportion of the CC alums, many of whom we had not heard from in years.

Since one of the purposes of *The Spillikin* is to keep in touch with our alumni, we were gratified with your letters of appreciation and with the number of you who returned the Christ College Alumni Survey. We were so pleased with the response to this survey that we are enclosing the form again this year, hoping that those of you who did not return it last year will do so this year.

Already we have benefitted greatly from these surveys. We have summarized and studied your responses to the questions about the relative value of various features of the Christ College program. We have tabulated the professions and vocations into which CC alums eventually gravitate. Not unexpectedly, perhaps, teaching leads the list, followed by law, the clergy, medicine, and computer programming and technology. But this only begins to tell the rich and interesting stories of all of your lives.

But we have also followed up on your responses in more concrete ways. Because we now have a record of where many of you attended, and still are attending, graduate school, we were able to put many of our seniors in touch with you to consult about prospective schools. And we invited a number of you back to campus to lead our Thursday evening Symposia. Dan P. McAdams ('75) discussed the research he has conducted in the area of personology; Rick Barton ('70) and David Nord ('69) led a symposium on Writing as a Career; John Messerschmidt ('78) entitled his talk "Ivory Towers and Wall Street," inviting us to consider the relationship of the liberal arts and the business world; Greg Lippert ('72) and Jackie Lyden ('75) made a joint presentation on Media and Society; and Paul Sieving ('70) helped us explore the moral and ethical issues of genetic engineering and screening. We hope to continue this practice so if you have an interest in conducting a symposium, please contact Dean Meyer.

Because many of you responded favorably to receiving the first issue of the *Valparaiso University Creative Work and Research* booklet last year, we are enclosing the second issue with this *Spillikin*. We hope that you enjoy reading these materials, and we look forward to hearing from all of you.

Arlin G. Meyer
Dean

Christ College Fiction

Christ College alums continue to write, and we include in this issue two recent publications, The El Cholo Feeling Passes (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 1985), a novel by Frederick Barton, and Bernice: A Comedy in Letters (Chicago: Metis Press, 1984) by Georgia Jo Ressmeyer.

Barton graduated from Valpo in 1970, received his M.A. and A.B.D. in History from UCLA, and an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa in Creative Writing. Since 1979 he has taught English at the University of New Orleans and has reviewed movies for WDSU-TV and the Gambit Newspaper. His second novel, Unwed Mothers, is scheduled for publication by Peachtree Publishers this fall.

Reviewing The El Cholo Feeling Passes is Stephen Hitchcock, a 1971 CC alum. Steve received his M.Div. from Christ Seminary-Seminex in 1975, worked for Evangelical Lutherans in Mission in St. Louis from 1975-77, as Executive Director of Lutheran Human Relations Association in Valparaiso for three years, as President of the Public Management Institute in San Francisco from 1981-84, and for the past two years as a consultant to non-profit organizations in Albany, CA. He regularly sends the dean notices of books he has read.

The El Cholo Feeling Passes

"Criticism comes easier than craftsmanship."
--Zeuxis

Frederick Barton has written a good book. Fittingly, it's been nominated for the American Book Award. Frederick Barton has written a novel. At its best, it does suspend disbelief.

And it's enjoyable reading. The story is engaging, and despite the switch in narrative point of view and the flashbacks to elementary and high school days, it is a straightforward story. The writing style is comfortable, and Barton's dialogue is often sassy and sarcastic, sometimes hilarious.

The novel's conceit is that of a collection of journal writings, with a covering memo, "submitted in lieu of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in History at the University of California, July 4, 1976." Ostensibly written by Richard Janus, these first-person notes are punctuated by sections written in third person. The chapters in third-person voice are in chronological order, starting with 1969 at Lancaster College outside of Chicago and ending with 1976 in New Orleans with Janus.

Both of these voices narrate Richard Janus' pilgrimage from his elementary school days in the old South to his disillusion with graduate study in the new West. On the way, Janus spends time in St. Louis, where he teaches high school and uses painfully humorous stratagems to avoid being drafted into the Vietnam War.

While at Lancaster, Janus meets, courts, and marries Faith Cleaver, and their turbulent marriage dominates the novel. In the midst of their battles--and during the interludes--novelist Barton tells some delightful stories and offers insightful reflections. I'm indebted to him for enlarging my understanding of God and forgiveness, friendship, teaching and learning, maturity and aging, and even Indian history (the subject of the aborted dissertation).

Once Janus and his wife reach Santa Monica, California, where he pursues his delayed graduate studies at UCLA, we get to accompany him to two Fortran conferences. Fortran Foundation funds the graduate study of Janus and other young scholars across the country. Each year these women and men are brought together. These conferences--along with accounts of UCLA history faculty meetings--are scathing, yet humorous, indictments of the modern university system.

But the book's accessibility and its contemporary relevancy are deceiving. On my second reading, the delightful first chapter became an art: the book's major themes and symbols are all introduced, and set in motion are the events that will play out in the next 461 pages.

My second reading, however, left unresolved some of the troubled feelings about the novel. I write this review on the day that John Ciardi died. Poetry editor for *Saturday Review* for more than two decades, Ciardi has these past few years brightened my mornings with his delightful, gravely-voiced discourses on National Public Radio about the origins of words. In NPR's tribute to Ciardi, they played back his plea for "a poetry of containment," for a bridling of self-expression.

Another way to put my anxiety about Barton's novel is expressed in Warren Rubel's remark--told with that kind laugh of his, to a class during those heady days of the late 1960s--that "youth seeks freedom while their parents crave order."

At one level, *The El Cholo Feeling* is well ordered. Its structure reflects both care and purpose. But I also wish the author hadn't so freely revealed so much about Richard and Faith. I wish, too, he would have contained his love for symbols: the use of names, for example, is just too much: Janus, Faith, Burden (his doctoral advisor). And as he and Faith have their last meal together at the El Cholo Restaurant, Janus "knocked the margarita over. The glass broke into two jagged pieces; the greenish white liquid sloshed over the table and dripped slowly to the floor."

Less would have been more.

Especially the endless debates between husband and wife. Perhaps their irrational, unending quality is meant to convey the weariness and pain the author felt. But the exchanges get so bizarre and the arguments so convoluted that I lost the book's narrative thread--and my patience.

Perhaps there is an ironic ambiguity that I missed. Certainly, the novel's title suggests such an ambiguity at the novel's core, and the narrator's name and repeated comments warn us of his "misimpressions of myself." Barton is also persuasive about the intermingling of love and evil. But so much of the novel is "autobiographical." Are we supposed to laugh at the mock heroics in the battles of marriage and academe? Or does Barton want us to sympathize with this

Perhaps, to seek another explanation, it is the confusion felt only by those of us who know Barton and his wife, and have lived in those places and at that time.

Nevertheless, I praise and commend Rick Barton's first novel. He is a craftsman with a great talent and passion. I'm glad a second is in preparation. I will look forward to reading it.

-- Stephen Hitchcock

Like Barton, Georgia Jo Ressimyer also graduated from Valpo in 1970. After receiving her J.D. from Yale Law School in 1974, Georgia has worked for Milwaukee Legal Services, as Project and Personnel Coordinator for Women's Coalition, Inc. in Milwaukee, as Staff Attorney for Southwestern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, and since 1984 as the Assistant State Public Defender for the Milwaukee Mental Health Division. In 1980 she was the recipient of the Women's Coalition Award for outstanding contributions to the Women's Movement in Milwaukee, and she twice received grants in Creative Writing from the Wisconsin Arts Board.

The following epistolary review of Bernice is written by Marie Failing, a 1973 CC Scholar. Marie received her J.D. from the Valparaiso University School of Law and her LL.M. from Yale Law School. For five years Marie worked in various capacities for the Legal Services Organization of Indiana in Indianapolis, and since 1983 she has taught at the Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul. Within the past three years she has adopted two daughters, Joanna and Kristina.

Bernice: A Comedy in Letters

A true story about one woman's attempt to find love and avoid being jailed for unpaid parking tickets.

St. Paul, MN
April 22, 1986

Dear Bernice,

Your letters were passed on to me for "a review." I didn't want to play into your (or MGM's) hands by writing something you could use to sell your musical (movie, TV series, or whatever). (I will think about sending a contribution to the Society for the Preservation of Bernice Balconey's Psychic Freedom, using the tear-out sheet at the end of your book.) Moreover, I thought it only appropriate to write to you, rather than about you. While you certainly are a character, you are not a character to be objectified in a review and thus made to appear fictional. Like Georgia Jo, I'm a former Legal Aid lawyer; I therefore know that you exist, just as my clients who (respectively) lived on a bicycle and spoke to the moon-God really lived. Once I realized that you were a live person, many of my initial literary objections to your letters disappeared.

First, the most important thing I have to say about your book: it made my heart laugh out loud. I know I'm supposed to give reasons for that conclusion. Yet, after spending the last few weeks evaluating papers which display no sign that the authors know what a thesis is, much less how to argue it, I am left with the sense that we require "proof" or at least arguments too much in this world for some things. You implicitly ask the reader of your letters to trust you, to believe that Bernice and her letters hang together in a realistic way, that there is method in this admitted madness. Perhaps anyone who is seriously considering whether she should spend the \$8.95 and hour or two on the book will trust me when I suggest that it's well worth the time and the money only for the giggles. And it's true. It's a big

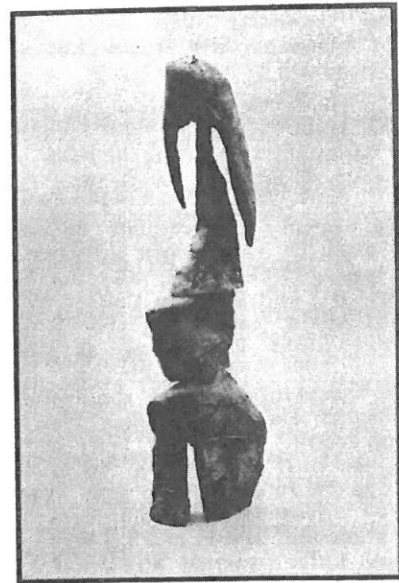
Indeed, it's the feminist, and the feminine, in your book which most touched me. (Surely, though, you occasionally posture a little too much about the gaylady subthemes in the book, as if to suggest that the rest of us won't get the point.) I particularly liked your choice of genre. Although someone has surely said it better already, I think the epistolary style makes its own feminist point. Like other women, you have turned one of women's traditional burdens, letter-writing (thank-yous, invitations, mother-in-law responses) into a genuine power for expressing important things about us and our values. You make literature in the same way Judy Chicago makes art: her legions of quilters draw the uncommon forth from the commonplace, allow the muted voice to speak in an unfamiliar forum. It's not just that letters allow women to talk about their work and daily lives in ways which would seem trivial or mundane in other genres. Letters also suggest how half-finished our own expression seems to us, admit that we are always involved in an intimate conversation within the human relationships which are important to us. Your letters are always incomplete, just as your "book" is incomplete, waiting to be made whole by the responses of those who read it. It is the epitome of the subjective, of the first person, even while it reports what has happened and will happen more often than it characterizes thought and feeling. And from a neo-feminist point of view, letters like yours allow us to be intuitive, not to make logical sense nor to be pushed into the lockstep of so-called rational discourse. In letters, the utterly unconnected pieces of women's lives can be spread out to view, whole, unedited, to make such sense as they can.

Once I understood your formal direction, your "thesis"--or more properly, the pattern of your life--started taking focus, and I became less irritable about some things. For instance, the cacophony of persons who wrote Bernice's letters really jarred a bit at first: Bernice to Judge Collins (smartass, pompous Bernice); Bernice to parents (cynical, resigned Bernice); Bernice to Aurelia Sipes (plaintive, angry, flippant Bernice); Bernice to Wisconsin Arts Conclave (ironically absurd Bernice). I really wished, Bernice, that you would have followed through with a few of your schemes--your call to the Society Salon Des Muses to demonstrate at Judge Collins' court dressed as fruits and vegetables, your Wisconsin arts project entitled, "What Lesbians Do," or your Second Annual Aphrodite Aphroditte Bee and Lake Michigan Festival. It bothered me occasionally that you would moon after such a bimbo as Aurelia Sipes, whose idea of poetry is "i am a bird i am a deer i am a cottontail my spirit is unleashed," and whose idea of love is sitting at the feet of a liquid-eyed Vermont free spirit. And sometimes I didn't like the fact that you wrote to lots of people as if they were one-dimensional. Okay, so it might have been all right with boorish Judge Parker and your bozo parish parents. Probably accurate. I've known a few like that. But to suggest that your attorney, Lily Barnstraw, was humorless and cowardly simply because she asked you not to dress up for your court appearance like Lady Justice with money in her hands? I respectfully object.

I guess I can see why you went to jail, and it wasn't to demonstrate that poverty is not a constitutional disease. I can see why you'd write such frustrated platitudes to your diary. Why you even tacked on a "sane" kind of denouement, instead of letting the pieces fall where they were scattered. It wasn't really about any of the Systems and their relentless irrationality at all. You really wanted to believe that Aurelia took you as you were, even if she didn't like your candlelight bubblebath dinners. That those personae that you call a life were accepted. You wanted them all to accept, even Judge Collins, even Your "Mom." Maybe you were right to be content with a little acceptance for a little while, to trust occasionally in the illusion of a little wholeness. Women's necessary white lie. Because, as you so wittily point out, the whole world is so unwilling to trust and to accept. Even to accept a joke.

Yours in the conversation,
Marie

Substitute Things of Clay



David Christian ('73) recently sent us a poster of his exhibit of Ceramic Constructions at the Studio Arts Gallery on the University of Minnesota campus. The title of his exhibit was "Substitute Things of Clay," and the poster included the following explanation:

There is a story behind the title of my show, a story with elements from Japanese history and legend. History tells us that the ancient Japanese observed the custom of 'following the dead' by sacrificing living persons upon the death of certain prominent citizens. Legend tells us how this custom may have come to an end. It said that a guild of clayworkers created *Haniwa*, representations of both animate and inanimate objects which could be used in place of human sacrifice. The emperor, pleased with the alternative, issued an edict:

Henceforth let it be the law for future ages to substitute things of clay for living men.

The *Haniwa* figures have intrigued me for some time. Their lively forms have directly influenced the gestures in my own work. But I was especially pleased to discover this account of their origin, for it reflects my own understanding of the role of art in the world. In the legend these simple figures become not only works of art, but also a creative response to violence.

Although David's exhibit closed on June 6, I am sure that anyone in the Twin Cities area interested in his work could contact him at his home.

HOME COMING

Christ College invites you to attend an Open House in Mueller Hall on Saturday, October 4, at approximately 11:30 a.m. The faculty hopes to see many of you at that time.

So That's Where You Are!

Space prohibits us from identifying and listing all of the people who returned Alumni Survey forms, but we have arbitrarily selected one graduate from each of the past twenty-two years to feature in this issue. We will continue to inform you about the lives of other alums in subsequent issues.

- '65 *Kathleen Behrenbruch Hindman* earned her M.A. at Louisiana State University and her Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University. Since 1967 she has taught English at Mansfield University in Pennsylvania. She has published several articles on Graham Greene and Jack London.
- '66 While working on graduate degrees *Sharon Haug Rosenkoetter* has taught in settings as varied as Hope Preschool in McPherson, KS, the Lake County Jail in Waukegan, IL, and Bethany College in Lindsborg, KS. Currently she is completing her Ph.D. in Human Developmental Child Psychology at the University of Kansas.
- '67 After completing all the requirements for a Ph.D. in English except the dissertation at Case Western Reserve University, *Ellen Behl Trier* decided she wanted to be with her first son "to be the primary influence in his life." She is raising three sons, two highly gifted, one retarded, does lots of volunteer work in Hudson, OH, where she lives, and is looking forward to a career.
- '68 *Peter Lutze* earned an M.F.A. in Film from Brandeis, a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin, and is currently completing a Ph.D. in film at Wisconsin. Over the years he has worked at the Tokyo Lutheran Church as a teacher, at U.S. Steel as a railroad switchman, at Yale as a librarian and bookseller, at G & O Radiator as a tube saw cutter, at Abacus Restaurant as a waiter, at Alex Rubin as a law clerk, at KTCV-TV as a program developer, and at ABA as a video producer.
- '69 With an M.A. in American History from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in Mass Communications from the University of Wisconsin, *David Nord* is currently Assistant Professor of Journalism at Indiana University. He has been a reporter and editor, has published studies for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and has written professional articles in journalism and history.
- '70 After graduating from Valpo *Alan J. Rider* studied law for two years at the University of Virginia and then completed his M.Div. at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, PA. After serving two years as Associate Pastor in Springfield, VA, he is presently Pastor at Christ the Servant Church in Reston, VA. He serves on a number of LCA boards and committees.
- '71 *Donna Rae Schlimpert Rathert* has worked as an advertising copywriter for Concordia Publishing House, a parish worker in St. Louis, and more recently as a free lance writer in Kalamazoo, MI. She has taken over a dozen courses in social work, history, and visual arts at various universities and has authored three children's books published by Concordia Publishing House. Donna is the CC representative on the Alumni Board of Directors.
- '72 *Timothy Friederichs* received his M.D. from the University of Missouri, and after three years of residency in St. Petersburg, FL, he was a National Health Service Corps physician in Soledad, CA. In 1983 he established a family practice in Soledad. Tim notes that in the medical world his friends are generally impressed with his knowledge of English literature.
- '73 Since graduation *Kathryn Baerwald* has lived in the Twin Cities area, earning her J.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1975, working as a Law Clerk and Associate at Bocker and Grant from 1974-77, as Associate Director for the American Lutheran Church Foundation from 1978-82, and since 1982 as General Secretary for the American Lutheran Church. Kathryn has received Honorary LL.D. degrees from Christ Seminary-Seminex and Concordia College (Moorhead) and the Distinguished Alumna Award from Valparaiso University.
- '74 *Kristin Gehring* completed a certificate program in acting training at the Drama Studio London in Berkeley and has studied theatre and dance in workshops in Chicago, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Amherst, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco. She recently completed an M.F.A. program in Acting at Temple University. Over the past eleven years Kristin has acted, directed, and taught in a number of theatres, and during lean times has bartended, cooked, typed, word processed, and worked as a project coordinator for Crocker Bank in California.
- '75 After two years at Seminex *Steven Krenz* changed his career plans from theology-philosophy to "working with my hands, and my head and eye." After working for Yucca Builders, Twining Construction, Adobe Corporation, and Robert Farrell Builders, all in Santa Fe, Steve now owns the Southwest Cabinet and Construction Company. He serves on a number of local boards and commissions and is designing and building his own solar adobe home.
- '76 *Rebecca R. Pallmeyer* received her J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School. After a year as Judicial Clerk to Justice Rosalie E. Wahl, Minnesota Supreme Court, she was an Associate with Hopkins and Sutter in Chicago for five years. Since 1985 she has served as Administrative Law Judge for the Illinois Human Rights Commission. "Acting as a judge is its own reward," Becky says. "I love this job."
- '77 After receiving an M.A. in English from the University of North Carolina, *Steven Beste* decided that "a career in graduate school seemed unprofitable so I got a job." He has worked as a Technical Writer and Software Engineer for Data General Corporation. Steve was a member of the development team for the Data General/One portable computer and wrote the *Data General/One Programmer's Guide*.
- '78 *Bruce Keunzel* is presently Associate Pastor of Lutheran Church of the Master in Minneapolis. He is also completing an M.Th. at Luther Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul. After receiving his M.Div. from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1983, Bruce was a chaplain at St. Louis Children's Hospital and United Hospitals in St. Paul.
- '79 *Mary Burce Warlick* received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1981. Since then she has worked with the U.S. Refugee Program in the Philippines, as a Foreign Service Officer with the State Department in Manila, and with the Foreign Service Institute in Washington D.C. For the next two years, Mary and her husband James will be stationed in Bangladesh. In 1985 Mary received the Department of State Meritorious Award.
- '80 While completing his M.A. in Political Science at the University of Chicago, *Dan Friedrich* has been side-tracked into the area of data analysis and computer programming. "Since I found these skills challenging, creative, and enjoyable tasks, I simply went ahead with a crash self-education program and have made a mini-career out of them," Day says. He has designed and implemented software programs for the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Michael Reese Medical Center, a number of banks, and numerous other organizations.
- '81 Since receiving her J.D. degree from George Washington University Law School in 1984, *Kathryn A. Sayers Ledig* has been an attorney with Spenser, Krause and Madone in Washington D.C. where she feels "somewhat like a capitalist--after reading in the CC newsletter about the worthy deeds my classmates have done." "But," Kathy says, "I feel strongly that CC was an excellent foundation for both my career and my life as a contributing adult in society."

'82 *Cathy Boehringer* recently won 2nd prize in the national law student writing contest sponsored by the Trial Lawyers Association of America for her essay, "Exporting or Importing Justice? Access to U.S. Courts for Victims of Extra-Territorial Toxic Torts." One student from each law school in the country is selected to submit a paper. Cathy represented Indiana University Law School where she received her J.D.-M.P.A. degree, having completed a program in Law and Public Administration. She is working for Wyatt, Tarrent, and Combs, one of the largest firms in Louisville, KY.

'83 *Kathy Will* combined her interests in the humanities and natural sciences, first by receiving a Masters in Science Journalism at the Northwestern Medill School of Journalism and for the past year as Associate Science Editor for the Northwestern University Medical School.

'84 Since graduation *Jonathan Krutz* has been Director of Publications and Editor of *The Sinfonian*, a magazine for Phi Mu Alpha, the national music fraternity. Jon keeps his voice in shape by singing with the Evansville Philharmonic Chorus and the Chamber Singers.

'85 During the past year *Christopher Schulze* and *Steven Volz* have been working with the Peace Corps in Botswana, Africa. They are teaching and working on other projects as well. According to Chris, the teaching day is 12 periods long, from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., quite different, one suspects, from the schedule they adopted while students at Valpo.

'86 In the fall *Laura Blair* will enroll at the University of Chicago to study English. Graduating with majors in English, French, Humanities and only one course short of a major in Mathematics, Laura was a regional finalist for a Rhodes Scholarship and the recipient of the prestigious (and lucrative) Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities. Laura was one of 123 fellows selected from among 1565 candidates.

CCers Explore the Underside of the Inner Cities

Each year, a number of Christ College graduates, either because they lack clear career goals or because they possess a strong humanitarian commitment, decide to devote a year or two of their lives to some organization concerned with human welfare. In the last issue of The Spillikin, we featured two alums who had joined the Peace Corps; this year we requested contributions from three recent graduates who joined Lutheran Volunteer Corps, a Washington D.C. based operation that responds to the needs of inner-city people in a number of metropolitan areas.

Jon Schmidt ('84) worked for a year with Bread for the City in Washington D.C. Jon Brockopp ('84) has worked this past year with Clergy and Laity Concerned in Chicago, and Paula Droege ('85) with the Downstate New York Nuclear Freeze Campaign.

Despite their varied assignments, these three LVCers were all involved with Social Justice, Intentional Christian Community, and Simplified Lifestyles, the three tenets of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. They used these three tenets to organize their reflections on their LVC experience, Jon Schmidt writing about Social Justice, Paula Droege about Christian Community, and Jon Brockopp about Simplified Lifestyles.

In May of 1984 I drove to Washington, D.C. to inspect what was to become my home for the next year. My initial impressions of Washington were not of the Lincoln Memorial, Capitol Hill, and a tidy Mall, but of a city where the sun shined on a few people awaking a

bag of groceries, and prostitutes exposing a good deal more of themselves than decorum would permit. All of this on the corner of 14th and N Streets where I was to live and work.

As I was growing up, Washington took on a mythical aura as a center of world power. But here, not five blocks from the White House, were people who just did not seem to fit into my picture. The contacts I was to make during my year with the LVC were not with the rich and powerful, but with the voiceless and powerless.

I recently drove from Southeast Washington, a section of the city across the Anacostia River, to the Capitol Hill area. What a jarring paradox--from woeful housing conditions and despair to uncountable wealth and pride. The sparkling townhouses juxtaposed against the ravaged projects of Southeast Washington.

In *Grapes of Wrath* John Steinbeck writes: "There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success."

All of this success and all of this failure.

As a volunteer with LVC, I worked at Bread for the City. Bread offers food, clothing, and counseling to those in need. All volunteers within the program work with an agency committed towards social justice--a night shelter for homeless women, an after-school program for ghetto kids, a community tenant's union, advocacy work with the Lutheran Council in the USA. The process of social justice takes place in the unglamorous world of human suffering.

One of the most powerful literary images for me comes from the *Grapes of Wrath*. Rose of Sharon, sister of Tom Joad, has just lost her child as the novel comes to a close. Amid utter despair, the final scene shows Rose of Sharon breast-feeding a starving man. One small liquid meal for a starving man who had lost hope. Not much to offer to be sure. Likewise a bag of food and a shirt did not seem to be much for me to offer.

During my year with LVC I learned that social justice demands discovery--externally and internally. In learning about the lives of others, I learned about myself. Presuppositions constantly crumbled in the face of real human experience. The images I held of the "underprivileged" seem now to be so silly. But my new images need daily re-education.

In the shadow of the shining rotunda of the Capitol Building wander 10,000 homeless. I feel empty when I wordlessly pass a man who begs for my help, but there are so many. "What am I supposed to do?" Sometimes it seems that what we who are connected with LVC do is fruitless. Yet in its acts of justice, LVC speaks loudly at the walls of injustice, asking for a change, asking that we receive others in their need. Henri Nouwen writes that we must first receive before we can truly give. In receiving the pain of the suffering, we find that we are compelled to act.

-- Jon Schmidt

"Community is a great concept, but geez, can you screw it up." Thus spake Alex Williamson, a two-year veteran of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps.

The second tenet of LVC, Intentional Christian Community, was the lynchpin in the twisted framework of my ideals that caused me to join the program this year. The recruitment brochure proclaims that community is "sharing, laughing, bathroom schedules, gospel talks, tears and back rubs." I thought, That's what I need next year in my fight to save the world--people around with the same goals.

That's where I was wrong. People in LVC don't have all the same goals. One LVCer might say that the brochure vision of community creates a group of

Midwestern idealists who hide in their modestly furnished homes and try very hard to be in poverty but not of it. Someone else might see my vision as an elite caste of martyrs who each work 80 hours a week, exercise, eat vegetables and soybeans, and still have time for spiritual sharing with each other. These distorted images show how visions of community can conflict, making the realization of anyone's goal impossible.

This kind of goal conflict was, to a lesser degree, the cause of my community's problems. As each of realized that her or his particular vision of community was inconsistent with the others' visions, depression and guilt took over.

My God, the lament resounded, our community is failing.

Community became a god and we all felt it was our fault, personally, that things weren't as we had pictured them.

Then, somewhere in the fog of confusion that had settled over my vision of "community" and where I'd gone wrong, it became clear to me that I was focusing on the wrong thing. In concentrating on my ideal community, I had overlooked the real community that was there all the time.

The four of us are a community--not good or bad, not a success or a failure. We live together and we try to deal with each other as human beings. That makes us a community. We don't always laugh, cry, give back rubs or any of that stuff. Sometimes we don't even like each other. That does not make us any less a community, or a bad community; it simply means we have to work harder to understand each other.

Being human is complicated because we make mistakes. Living in community has not meant I make fewer mistakes; it's meant I always have the chance to try again. I still try to save the world now and then. Now, when I fail, there are always people around to say they told me so.

-- Paula Droege

Living simply--it's an important part of the LVC experience, but perhaps the hardest part to explain. The Shaker folk song "Simple Gifts" does as well as any: "When true simplicity is gained, to bow and to bend we shan't be shamed." Simple living is a gift, for it removes some of the things that separate us from the people with whom we live and work. It softens the jaundiced eye of criticism and teaches one to empathize with other expressions of human life.

I offer the following anecdotes not to give a chance for the comfortable voyeur to view the pathos of inner-city existence, but rather to show the rich experience that is open to those who will bend to live this way.

As I was sitting in the laundromat last Sunday writing a letter to a friend, my thoughts were suddenly interrupted by an old man who yelled to me: "Hey, Mr. Intelligent!" I did look a little out of place there--young, white male that I am--so I shouldn't have been surprised at such a remark. Still, I took offense at being called intelligent by a stranger. I thought the aura of CC would have worn off by now. "Mr. Intelligent, you got a quarter? I haven't had a cup of coffee in weeks!"

He moved up quickly to me, set his crutches aside, and sat on the floor. Before I could get the dollar out of my pocket, he reached down to remove his leg bandage and showed me his foot. "I got run over by a car; Doctor says he's going to have to take it off tomorrow." It was badly mangled and inflamed: swollen blue scars ran up his calf. I asked him when it had happened.

"Oh, last year--I've been in the hospital for a long time. Got another dollar? I haven't had a smoke for weeks." I bought him cigarettes and listened to his World War II stories while I folded my clothes. He told me about the bombing missions in Germany and how we should nuke the Lybians just like we nuked the "Japs." He also told me his sister was a millionaire and would drive over and pay me a thousand times over if I wanted. I declined the offer. I turned again to my letter, and he was gone as quickly as he had come.

Sitting in the church kitchen listening to the homeless men sleep, I write in my journal, almost half asleep myself. A loud banging jars me into reality. I cross the floor, stepping lightly over tired bodies to the door. "Let me in," says a voice outside in broken English. "*Estamos cerrado*," I reply firmly in broken Spanish. He pleads, and bangs, and it is cold outside, but I refuse to open the door. He finally settles down, and as I wait to hear if he has left, there is the unmistakable sound of a man urinating on the church door. To let one angry man in out of the cold? or to disturb forty who get little enough sleep as it is? I decide to go with the rules, but I lose my sleep that night.

Simplified Lifestyle is a matter of opening oneself up to these other experiences, allowing one's values themselves to be shocked, torn and maybe reconstituted--simplified. The crime is that even as volunteers, living as we do, we still have so much. Job security, support networks, and educational backgrounds like ours are unparalleled in the neighborhood. We also have mobility; that's the most separating of all. I can easily travel the few miles to rural towns and open country. And what's more, I can fit in when I get there.

Eventually, though, one concludes that there is no escaping oneself. I can only be "poor in spirit." That is, I can only be present with those who have less and share stories, experiences, and emotions. I can never know their sorrow. Yet, this is still important, and it is enough to justify my actions. But it does little to solve the daily problems and injustices that they face.

-- Jon Brockopp

Goings and Comings

During the next academic year Mel Piehl will enjoy a sabbatical and leave of absence to work on a history of Christianity and social thought in twentieth-century America. According to Piehl, this proposed study "will attempt to discover and critically analyze the main lines of Christian social thought from approximately 1920 to 1970, and to interpret the mutual relations between Christianity and self-conscious American society during this period." Mel will spend most of the year working at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Replacing Piehl will be Gillian Bentley, a promising anthropologist who was born and raised in England. At the University of London she completed a program of studies in archeology, ancient history, and Biblical studies. Upon completing her dissertation this summer, Gillian will receive her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. She has worked on several archeological sites in Jordan, has published articles on early cultures, and for the past year has been completing research at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.

What's a Dean to do?

From a purloined letter: A recent CC alum--a prize alum at that--to a student looking ahead to her senior year: "Enjoy it, and don't study too hard! I almost made that mistake."